

Message Text

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PASS DEPT OF LABOR (ILAB)

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TAGS: ELAB, CA
SUBJ: 12TH CANADIAN LABOR CONGRESS, APRIL 3-7, 1978

1. 2,410 DELEGATES TO THE 12TH CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION OF THE CANADIAN LABOR CONGRESS (CLC) LISTENED TO THE OPENING REMARKS OF LOUIS LABERGE, PRESIDENT OF THE CLC QUEBEC FEDERATION OF LABOR (QFL) AND JOE MORRIS, PRESIDENT OF THE CLC, ON APRIL 3, 1978. LABERGE SPOKE EXTEMPORANEOUSLY IN MODERATE PHRASES EXPLAINING QUEBEC LABOR'S SUPPORT OF THE PARTI QUEBECOIS (PQ) AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE BOURASSA ADMINISTRATION AND AS A MOVE TO OBTAIN MORE PROGRESSIVE LABOR LEGISLATION. HE APPEALED TO THE DELEGATES TO HAVE PATIENCE WITH THE "NEW ASSOCIATION" ISSUE AND TO SUPPORT THE CLC DOCUMENT "STATEMENT ON NATIONAL SOLIDARITY" WHICH WAS DISTRIBUTED. HE ASKED THAT THE LABOR MOVEMENT NOT ALLOW ITSELF TO BE PUSHED INTO A HASTY DECISION TO SATISFY THE INTEREST OF SOME POLITICIANS. HE SAID THAT ONLY A FEW MORE MONTHS WERE NEEDED BEFORE THE QFL CALLS A SPECIAL CONVENTION OF QUEBEC DELEGATES TO DRAFT ITS OWN POSITION ON THE POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL FUTURE OF QUEBEC. HIS PLEA WAS FOR MODERATION. LATER IN THE DAY A DECISIVE MAJORITY OF THE CONVENTION DELEGATES VOTED TO ACCEPT THE CLC "STATEMENT ON NATIONAL SOLIDARITY"

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WHICH BOTH ASSERTED THE RIGHT OF QUEBEC WORKERS "TO DETERMINE OUR POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL FUTURE" AND FOR WORKERS IN OTHER PARTS OF CANADA "WE EXPRESS THE HOPE THAT A CONTINUING DIALOGUE WILL LEAD TO THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE RELATIONSHIP... OF OUR TWO COMMUNITIES OF PEOPLE IN A VIBRANT AND NEW CANADIAN SOCIETY."

2. COMMENT -- THERE WAS SOME EXPECTED EMOTIONALISM IN THE DISCUSSION OF THE QUEBEC STATUS ISSUE BUT THE ACCEPTANCE OF AN AMBIGUOUS STATEMENT CLEARED THE AIR FOR OTHER BUSINESS AND TEMPORARILY ELIMINATED ANY THREAT OF A DIVISIONIST MOVEMENT TAKING HOLD. END COMMENT

3. MORRIS READ A LONG SPEECH THAT REVIEWED SOME OF HIS FOUR YEAR TERM AND EMPHASIZED LABOR POLITICAL UNITY. HE TOLD THE DELEGATES THAT POLITICAL POWER IS ESSENTIAL IF LABOR IS TO ATTAIN ECONOMIC JUSTICE. HE CRITICIZED THE GOVERNMENTS ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE, SPECIFICALLY THE ANTI-INFLATION BOARD CONTROLS, AND WARNED THAT ORGANIZED LABOR MIGHT BE FACED WITH NEW MORE SUBTLE WAGE CONTROLS AFTER THE EXPIRY OF THE AIB ON APRIL 14TH. ONE, HE SAID, WOULD BE AN ATTEMPT BY THE GOVERNMENT TO LEGISLATE THE USE OF A COMPARABILITY FORMULA TO DETERMINE THE WAGES AND SALARIES OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES. THE SECOND WOULD BE AN ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX FORMULA IN A MANNER NOT FAVORABLE TO WORKERS UNDER INDEXED SALARIES AND PENSIONS. OTHER LABOR RHETORIC RECEIVED LACKLUSTER APPLAUSE.

4. COMMENT -- MORRIS IS OBVIOUSLY LIKED AND RESPECTED BUT NOTHING MORE. HIS SUCCESSOR, DENNIS MCDERMOTT, IS EXPECTED TO RECEIVE AN ENTHUSIASTIC VOTE OF CONFIDENCE AND SUPPORT IN THE CLC CONVENTION ELECTION ON APRIL 6TH.
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